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Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 0249, Room 2092 S
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Via Fax: 202-720-3499

Re: Approved food safety technologies for use in commodity purchase programs

GRACE Public Fund, in response to your request for comments regarding approved food safety technologies for use in commodity purchase programs, urges you to prohibit irradiated food from being served in the National School Lunch Program.

As you know, the jury is still out on the safety of irradiated food. While the USDA and FDA ignore studies that show the hazardous effects of eating irradiated food, they are promoting the use of this technology on food specifically prepared for children. FDA did not follow its own testing protocols when legalizing irradiated food. This Farm Bill provision allows children to be tested on for more than just academics.

Children should avoid irradiated food, not only because of the potential health hazards of eating this food, but because irradiation degrades the nutritional benefits of food. Research has revealed a wide range of health problems in laboratory animals that ate irradiated food including premature death, fatal internal bleeding, a rare form of cancer, stillbirths and other reproductive problems, genetic damage, organ malfunctions and nutritional deficiencies.

Irradiated food must not be served to children on such a regular, government-sanctioned basis until the FDA provides the public with more conclusive research. There is little research into the long-term health effects experienced by children who are exposed to toxic chemicals in foods. Dr. William Au, a toxicologist at the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch, has argued that the lack of understanding regarding the ill effects suffered by children who consume toxic chemicals in food extends to 'the toxicological risk with respect to eating irradiated food.'

It is a mistake to accept food irradiation as the solution to food contamination problems. Children and all Americans deserve better standards for food, not band-aids that cover up the industry's mistakes. We urge the USDA to take action to strengthen inspection and testing in the meat industry and put a stop to the implementation of this new provision in the school lunch program.

Sincerely,

Christina Salvi
Program Associate